7. Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

The Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services mission area includes three agencies: the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), and the Risk Management Agency (RMA). This mission area serves production agriculture, helping to keep America's farmers and ranchers in business as they face the uncertainties of weather and markets.

These agencies deliver commodity, credit, conservation, and emergency assistance programs that help improve the stability and strength of the agricultural economy, expand overseas markets for U.S. agricultural products, and promote world food security. They also sanction the provision by the private sector of a broad-based crop insurance program and other risk management tools.

The ongoing evolution of the Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services mission area, through reorganization, crop insurance reform, and farm program changes, has profoundly altered the way it operates. The Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 replaced the traditional Federal role in some farm programs with the economic forces of the marketplace. The management of risk in this volatile setting has moved more fully to an emerging partnership between Government and the private sector.

The public interest calls for a dynamic, efficient agriculture that provides a sustainable, safe, and affordable food and fiber supply. The challenge is to serve this public interest at a time of diminishing resources and a decreased role for the Federal Government.

Farm Service Agency

FSA Mission

The FSA mission is to ensure the well-being of American agriculture and the American public through efficient and equitable administration of agricultural commodity, farm loan, conservation, environmental, emergency assistance, and domestic and international food assistance programs.

The FSA home page can be found at *http://www.fsa.usda.gov*

FSA Vision

FSA is a customer-driven agency with a diverse and multi-talented workforce, empowered and accountable to deliver programs and services efficiently, and dedicated to promoting an economically viable and environmentally sound American agriculture.

What Is FSA?

FSA was established when USDA was reorganized in 1994, incorporating programs from several agencies, including the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (now a separate Risk Management Agency), and the Farmers Home Administration. Though its name has changed over the years, the agency's relationship with farmers dates back to the 1930's.

At that time, Congress set up a unique system under which Federal farm programs are administered locally. Farmers who are eligible to participate in these programs elect a three- to five-person county committee that reviews county office operations and makes many of the decisions on how to administer the programs. This grassroots approach gives farmers a much-needed say in how Federal actions affect their communities and their individual operations. After more than 60 years, it remains a cornerstone of FSA's efforts to preserve and promote American agriculture.

1996 Act

The 1996 Farm Bill significantly changed U.S. agricultural policy by removing the link between income support payments and farm prices. Farmers who participated in the wheat, feed grains, cotton, and rice programs in any one of the previous 5 years could enter into 7-year production flexibility contracts and receive a series of fixed annual "transition payments." These payments are independent of farm prices and specific crop production, in contrast to the past, when deficiency payments were based on farm prices and the production of specific crops.

The Federal Government no longer requires land to be idled, nor does it deny payments if farmers switch from their historical crops. The contract, however, requires participating producers to comply with existing conservation plans for the farm, wetland provisions, and planting flexibility provisions, and to keep the land in agricultural uses.

The law provided for a one-time signup, which ended August 1, 1996, for producers to enter into production flexibility contracts. There will be no additional signups except for land coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program. Farmers who entered into a contract are also eligible for market transition loans at local FSA offices.

Marketing Assistance Loan Programs

FSA administers commodity loan programs for barley, corn, honey, grain sorghum, mohair, oats, oilseeds, peanuts, rice, sugar, tobacco, wheat, upland and extra-long-staple cotton.

The agency provides the operating personnel for the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), which provides assistance with respect to products of certain agricultural commodities through loans and purchases. This provides farmers with interim financing and helps maintain balanced and adequate supplies of farm commodities and their orderly distribution throughout the year and during times of surplus and scarcity.

Instead of immediately selling the crop after harvest, a farmer who grows an eligible crop can store the commodity and take out a “nonrecourse” loan for its value, pledging the crop itself as collateral. Nonrecourse means that the producer can discharge debts in full by forfeiting or delivering the commodity to the Government.

The nonrecourse loan allows farmers to pay their bills and other loan payments when they become due, without having to sell crops at a time of year when prices tend to be at their lowest. Later, when market conditions are more favorable, farmers can sell crops and repay the loan with the proceeds. Or, if the prevailing price of the crop remains below the loan level set by CCC, farmers can keep loan proceeds and forfeit the crop to CCC instead. The repayment rate may also be reduced by USDA to minimize the costs of storing commodities and to allow commodities produced in the United States to be marketed freely and competitively, both domestically and internationally.

CCC loan rates are designed to keep crops competitive in the marketplace. A producer must have entered into a production flexibility contract to be eligible for nonrecourse marketing assistance loans for wheat, feed grains, rice, and upland cotton. Any production of a contract commodity by a producer who has entered into a production flexibility contract is eligible for loans.

Nonrecourse loans are also available for extra-long-staple cotton, oilseeds, peanuts, tobacco, raw cane sugar, and refined beet sugar, regardless of whether the producer has entered into a production flexibility contract. Price support for the marketing quota crops—tobacco and peanuts—is made available through producer loan associations. By law, these programs must operate at no net cost to the U.S. Treasury, and no-net-cost and marketing assessments are applied to both producers and purchasers.

Commodity Purchase Programs

Forfeitures under nonrecourse commodity loan programs are not the only means by which CCC acquires inventory. Under the dairy price support program, CCC buys surplus butter, cheese, and nonfat dry milk from processors at announced prices to support the price of milk. These purchases help maintain market prices at the legislated support level. This program was to be replaced in 2000 with a recourse loan program. However, the 2000 Act extended the dairy price support program until 2001.

CCC can store purchased food in over 10,000 commercial warehouses across the Nation approved for this purpose. However, commodity inventories are not simply kept in storage. FSA employees work to return stored commodities to private trade channels. At the agency’s Kansas City Commodity Office in Kansas City, Missouri, FSA merchandisers regularly sell and swap CCC inventories using commercial telecommunications trading networks.

Beyond the marketplace, CCC commodities fill the need for hunger relief both in the United States and in foreign countries. FSA employees work closely with USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service to purchase and deliver foods for the National School Lunch and many other domestic feeding programs. When donated to “Food for Peace,” and programs administered by voluntary organizations, these U.S. farm products and foods help USDA fight hunger worldwide.

Disaster Assistance Available From FSA

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides eligible producers of eligible crops with protection comparable to the catastrophic risk protection plan of crop insurance (see Risk Management Agency). It helps reduce production risks faced by producers of crops for which Federal crop insurance is not available. It also reduces financial losses that occur when natural disasters cause a catastrophic loss of production or prevented planting of an eligible crop.

Eligible crops include certain commercial crops or other agricultural commodities (except livestock):

- for which catastrophic risk protection under section 508(b) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act is not available; and
- that are produced for food or fiber.

Crops specifically included by statute include floricultural, ornamental nursery, and Christmas tree crops, turfgrass sod, seed crops, aquaculture (including ornamental fish), and industrial crops.

When damage to a crop or commodity occurs as a result of a natural disaster, producers requesting NAP assistance must meet certain requirements.

Emergency Loans

FSA provides emergency loans to help cover production and physical losses in counties declared disaster areas by the President or designated by the Secretary of Agriculture or the FSA Administrator (physical loss loans only). Emergency loans also are available in counties contiguous to such disaster areas. These loans are made to qualifying established family farm operators. Loans for crop, livestock, and non-real-estate losses are normally repaid in 1 to 7 years, and in special circumstances, up to 20 years. Loans for physical losses to real estate and buildings are normally repaid in 30 years, and in special circumstances, up to 40 years.

Other Emergency Assistance

In the aftermath of a natural disaster, FSA makes available a variety of emergency assistance programs to farmers in counties that have been designated or declared disaster areas.

FSA has several programs that are activated, usually by congressional action, during certain types of disasters. Among these are the Tree Assistance Program, which provides payments to eligible tree and vineyard growers who incurred losses due to natural disasters, including losses caused by freeze, excessive rainfall, floods, drought, tornado, and earthquakes.

Another such program, the Livestock Indemnity Program, helps livestock producers who suffered losses from recent natural disasters. It provides a partial reimbursement to eligible producers for livestock losses.

The Dairy Production Disaster Assistance Program helps dairy producers who suffered losses from natural disasters by providing a partial reimbursement for milk losses.

The Small Hog Operation Payment Program involved direct cash payments made to small hog producers to help them weather economic crisis. USDA estimated that 80-90 percent of producers, or nearly 100,000 nationwide, were eligible for these payments.

In the event of a national emergency, FSA is responsible for ensuring adequate food production and distribution, as well as the continued availability of feed, seed, fertilizer, and farm machinery.

Emergency Conservation Program

The Emergency Conservation Program provides emergency cost-share funding for farmers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters that create new conservation problems which, if not treated, would:

- impair or endanger the land,
- materially affect the productive capacity of the land,
- represent unusual damage which is not the type likely to recur frequently in the same area,
- be so costly to repair that Federal assistance is or will be required to return the land to productive agricultural use.

The assistance may be used for: removing debris from farmland; grading, shaping, and re-leveling farmland; restoring livestock fences; and restoring irrigation structures.

Farm Loans

FSA offers direct and guaranteed farm ownership and operating loan programs to farmers who are temporarily unable to obtain private, commercial credit and who meet other regulatory criteria. Often, these are beginning farmers who cannot qualify for conventional loans because they have insufficient net worth. The agency also helps established farmers who have suffered financial setbacks from natural disasters, or whose resources are too limited to maintain profitable farming operations.

Under the guaranteed farm loan program, the agency guarantees loans made by conventional agricultural lenders for up to 95 percent of principal, depending on the circumstances. The lender may sell the loan to a third party; however, the lender is always responsible for servicing the loan. All loans must meet certain qualifying criteria to be eligible for guarantees, and FSA has the right to monitor the lender's servicing activities. Farmers interested in guaranteed loans must apply to a conventional lender, who then arranges for the guarantee.

For those unable to qualify for a guaranteed loan, FSA also lends directly. Direct loans are made and serviced by FSA officials who also provide borrowers with supervision and credit counseling. Funding authorities for direct loans are limited, and applicants may have to wait until funds become available. To qualify for a direct farm ownership or operating loan, the applicant must be able to show sufficient repayment ability, pledge enough collateral to fully secure the loan, and meet other regulatory criteria.

Conservation Programs

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) protects our most fragile farmland by encouraging farmers to stop growing crops on highly erodible and other environmentally sensitive acreage. In return for planting a protective cover of grass or trees on vulnerable property, the owner receives a rental payment each year of a multi-year contract. Cost-share payments are also available to help establish permanent areas of grass, legumes, trees, windbreaks, or plants that improve water quality and give shelter and food to wildlife.

In the 18th CRP signup, held in 1998, about 5 million acres of land were accepted into the program. The accepted acreage includes 3.2 million acres of highly erodible land, almost 2.8 million acres of land located within conservation priority areas, over 450,000 acres of wetland and protective upland acres, and 217,000 acres to be restored to rare and declining habitats. Also, bids involving over 102,000 acres of long leaf pine habitat were accepted.

Another conservation program, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, is part of the CRP. This program shields millions of acres of American topsoil from erosion by encouraging the planting of protective vegetation. By reducing wind erosion as well as runoff and sedimentation, it also protects air and groundwater quality and helps improve countless lakes, rivers, ponds, streams, and other bodies of water.

State governments have the opportunity to participate in this groundbreaking environmental improvement effort. USDA provides incentives to agricultural producers to participate, while State governments contribute specialized local knowledge, technical help, and financial assistance. The result is an environmental enhancement effort tailored to the specific environmental needs of each State.

FSA works with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and other agencies to deliver other conservation programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP helps farmers and ranchers improve their property to protect the environment and conserve soil and water resources. Participants can take advantage of education in new conservation management practices, technical support, cost-share assistance, and incentive payments.

Where To Get More Information on FSA Programs

- Further information and applications for the programs described in this chapter are available at local FSA offices. These are usually listed in telephone directories in the section set aside for governmental/public organizations under "U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency." FSA State offices supervise the agency's local offices and are usually located in the State capital or near the State land-grant university.
- For information on commodity sales and purchases, contact:
USDA FSA Kansas City Commodity Office
P.O. Box 419205
Kansas City, MO 64141-6205
Telephone: 816-926-6364
- FSA's aerial photographs of U.S. farmlands are used extensively by Government and private organizations and the public. Order forms and an index are available from FSA local offices. For more information on photographic services, including high-altitude photography, contact:
USDA FSA Aerial Photography Field Office
2222 West 2300 South
Salt Lake City, UT 84119-2020
Telephone: 801-975-3500

Success Stories

Dialing for Hog Relief

In an effort to reach out to struggling hog producers, employees from several USDA agencies created and staffed an "800" number for farmers to get information on FSA's Small Hog Operation Payment (SHOP) Program. The workers answered questions on application procedures and qualifications from several hundred hog farmers. Fifty million dollars was provided to financially suffering hog farmers through direct cash payments.

"Hay Net" Aids Drought-Distressed Livestock

In August 1998 a new program was initiated to match farmers and ranchers without enough hay to feed their drought-distressed livestock with those who had surplus hay. Those in need registered at FSA's local offices and received a list of the closest producers with hay to spare, and vice versa. Farmers then could contact each other and make appropriate arrangements. It was a good example of farmers helping farmers, and a great tool for getting hay where it was needed as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Louisiana FSA Helps Fulfill a Dream

John Jenkins worked at local dairies in Louisiana for most of his life, and he wanted to operate his own dairy farm. With the assistance of a FSA county committee member, Jenkins was able to apply for and receive a loan to help him get started. His new farm is one of just seven minority-operated dairies in the State, which had 581 dairies in 1997.

Gleaning Success

FSA won first place in the 1998 USDA Food Drive, collecting 277,628 pounds of food, more than twice as much as its goal of 100,000 pounds and more than any other USDA agency. The food was donated to food banks, churches, homeless shelters, and soup kitchens.

A Green Thumb Up for a Youth Loan Borrower

Missourian Holly Norman always was fascinated with growing plants and flowers. She wanted to start up a greenhouse business, but, being only 14, couldn't get funds from a commercial institution.

She went to FSA's Polk County office to check out loan possibility. Her plan of operation was found to be top notch, and she got her loan, naming her business the Little Bit of Garden. She got two greenhouses built and stocked them with landscaping, vegetable, bedding, and house plants. Holly tends to her business every day and knows, even though her family helps out, that the responsibility for her loan repayment is hers. Any profit she makes goes toward repaying the loan, and FSA is sure she'll make a great business owner.

Foreign Agricultural Service

The Agency and Its Mission

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) is a USDA agency that represents the diverse interests of U.S. farmers and the food and agricultural sector abroad. It collects, analyzes, and disseminates information about global supply and demand, trade trends, and emerging market opportunities. FAS seeks improved market access for U.S. products and implements programs designed to build new markets and to maintain the competitive position of U.S. products in the global marketplace.

FAS also carries out food aid and market-related technical assistance programs, and operates a variety of congressionally mandated import and export programs. FAS helps USDA and other Federal agencies, U.S. universities, and others enhance the global competitiveness of U.S. agriculture and helps increase income and food availability in developing nations by mobilizing expertise for agriculturally led economic growth.

Formed in 1953 by executive reorganization, FAS is one of the smaller USDA agencies, with about 950 employees. FAS operates worldwide with staff in 80 posts covering more than 130 countries. Washington-based marketing specialists, trade policy analysts, economists, and others back up the overseas staff.

Roughly 70 percent of the annual FAS budget is devoted to building markets overseas for U.S. farm products. This includes the funding for all of FAS' trade and attache offices overseas, as well as its work with U.S. commodity associations on cooperative promotion projects. The remaining funds cover other trade functions, including gathering and disseminating market information and trade policy efforts. To get a complete picture of the services offered and information available for exporters, FAS invites you to visit its homepage at: *http://www.fas.usda.gov*

Overseas Representation

FAS' foreign service officers, with a support staff headquartered in Washington, DC, head up 47 agricultural affairs and 17 agricultural trade offices overseas. In addition, these officers manage 36 satellite offices headed by foreign national employees. Our foreign service officers wear many hats, serving as diplomats, negotiators, reporters, and marketing representatives for U.S. agricultural producers, processors, and exporters. By partnering with other USDA and Federal agencies, international organizations, State and local governments, and the U.S. private sector, our officers provide information used to plan and develop strategies for improving market access, promoting world food security, pursuing U.S. rights under trade agreements, and developing programs and policies to make U.S. farm products more competitive. For example, in FY 1999, FAS offices overseas submitted more than 3,800 reports from 88 different countries, covering 29 different agricultural commodities of interest to the United States. They also advise U.S. ambassadors on agricultural matters and represent U.S. agriculture before the government, trade, and public of their host countries.

Turbulent Decade for Agricultural Exports Ends in a Downturn

Everything's relative, some say. U.S. agricultural exports closed out the decade at $49 billion in fiscal 1999, a $9-billion gain since 1990. Had the path been steadily upward, it would have been judged a rock-solid performance. Instead, exports exploded past $50 billion in mid-decade, climbing to $60 billion in 1996. Bulk commodity prices were high, consumer food exports were setting new records, and optimism reigned.

But that was as good as the numbers would get. For the next 3 years, the momentum turned in another direction, as commodity prices were steadily eroded by large global supplies, increasing competition, a strengthening U.S. dollar, and weakened demand from a global financial crisis that began in Asia. Of course, $49 billion is still ahead of any export levels achieved before the mid-1990's. But, it is also the weakest performance since 1994, down 9 percent from 1998 and a full 18 percent below the 1996 record.

Fiscal Year 1999 Exports Summary

Fiscal year 1999 did not shape up much better. Pressures from large supplies and subsequent low prices maintained their grip on farm commodity markets, even though most countries affected by the crisis are back on the recovery path.

U.S. solid wood products and seafood products fared generally better than agricultural products in 1999 world markets. Wood product sales were down only about 1 percent from the previous year, while seafood netted a 19-percent increase in export value.

U.S. agricultural imports continued to grow in fiscal 1999, edging up to a new record of $37.5 billion. Despite the combination of lower exports and rising imports, agriculture posted its 40th straight annual trade surplus–albeit the lowest surplus since 1987–at $11.5 billion. The highest was $27.2 billion in 1996.

Bulk Agricultural Exports Off 11 Percent

Bulk commodities took another plunge in fiscal 1999, as sagging demand and large global production brought some of the lowest prices in decades. While export volume rose 15 percent to 114 million tons, weak prices more than offset added tonnage. Corn was an exception–a 38-percent increase in tonnage lifted coarse grains to a 12-percent value gain. The major factor: less competition from China and Argentina. For wheat, U.S. aid donations helped prop up volume, but export value still dropped 4 percent. Soybean exports plummeted 23 percent, reflecting large global supplies, weak demand, and rock-bottom prices. Cotton fared worse, with sharply reduced volume from the small U.S. crop, plus low prices. Total U.S. bulk commodity exports were $10 billion below fiscal 1996's $28.8 billion.

Figure 7.1

Nineties Close with U.S. Agricultural Exports at 5-Year Low, But Well Above Decade's Start

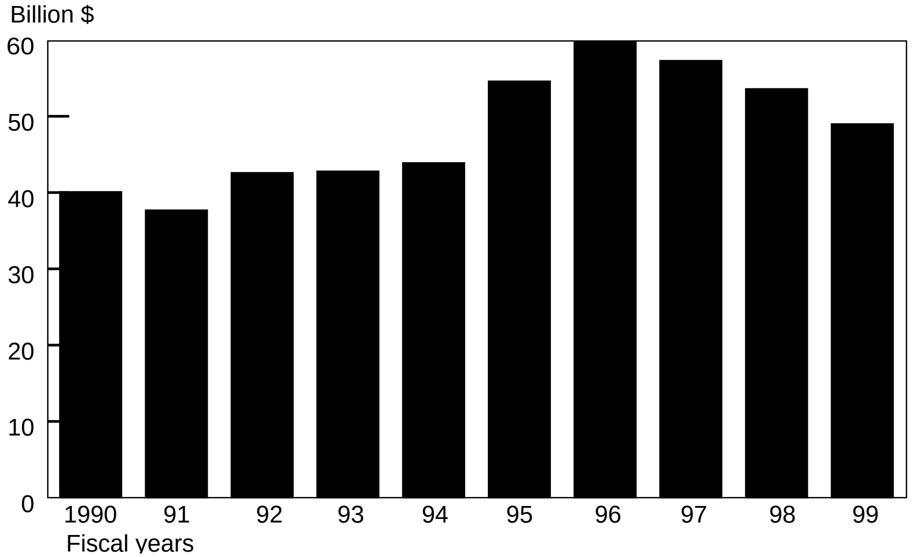

Table 7-1.

U.S. Bulk Commodity Exports, FY 1998-99

	FY 1998	*FY 1999*	*1998-99 change*
Commodity	*—$ million—*		*Percent*
Coarse grains	4,991	5,607	+12
Soybeans	6,137	4,748	-23
Wheat	3,805	3,664	-4
Tobacco	1,448	1,376	-5
Cotton	2,543	1,323	-48
Rice	1,138	1,015	-11
Pulses	319	270	-15
Peanuts	203	188	-7
Other	359	376	+5
Total	**20,942**	**18,566**	**-11**

Note: Fiscal years are October-September (i.e., fiscal 1999 ran Oct. 1, 1998-Sept. 30, 1999).

Exports of Intermediate Agricultural Products Down 12 Percent

U.S. exports of intermediate agricultural products dropped 12 percent in fiscal 1999 to the lowest since 1994. Most product categories were down, with sharp declines for soy meal, soy oil, hides, and animal fats. For oilseed products, large South American supplies, intense competition, and lackluster demand cut prices and volumes. Hides got a tanning as sluggish Asian demand paired with a slowdown from Europe. Bright spots were few. Wheat flour exports surged 52 percent, mainly from U.S. donations to Bangladesh, Yemen, and other destinations, as well as $10 million in sales to Israel. Among the top four U.S. markets, intermediate product sales fell 25 percent to the European Union (EU), 4 percent to Canada, 10 percent to Mexico, and 11 percent to Japan. The record high remains at $12.2 billion in exports, set in 1997.

Consumer Food Exports Not Yet Back on Track

U.S. exports of foods, beverages and other consumer-oriented agricultural products eased for a second year, following 12 record-setting years. The modest 4-percent drop left consumer food sales at $1 billion below 1997's all-time high–but still $8-$9 billion higher than when the decade began. The collapse in Russian buying gets the blame for the 26-percent falloff in poultry meat exports. On the plus side, juices and breakfast cereals set new records, with juices benefiting from strong Asian, European, and North American Free Trade Agreement sales. For consumer foods overall, export records were set to Canada and Mexico, and to some smaller markets, including China. Fiscal 1999 marked the first time that consumer foods topped bulk commodities in export value. Consumer foods accounted for 40 percent of total U.S. agricultural exports, up from 24 percent in 1990.

Most Major Markets Caught in Downtrend

Most major markets contributed to the 1999 downturn. U.S. agricultural exports to Japan fell for the third straight year, while both Canada and Mexico backed off from 1998 records and several years of growth. Weak prices and sales of bulk and semi-processed commodities were mainly responsible, as consumer food sales set new highs in Canada and Mexico. Financial crisis pushed Russia out of the top 10, with a 58-percent dive despite U.S. food aid. China and Hong Kong led a drop in U.S. exports to Asia's Pacific Rim, but South Korea and Taiwan were notable exceptions. A recovering Korean economy helped turn 1998's 32-percent plunge in U.S. exports into a 9-percent rebound for fiscal 1999.

Wood Product Sales Remain in a Slump

Fiscal 1999 marked a second year of weakness for exports of solid wood products. Robust domestic demand kept U.S. prices up, while housing starts in Japan remained slow. Export value dipped below $6 billion to the lowest in the 1990's–off 20 percent from 1997's $7.5 billion record high. Canada finally overtook Japan as our top market. Sales to Japan slumped another 4 percent, adding up to a 50-percent drop since 1996 (an unusually strong year in that market). Meanwhile, exports to Canada

Table 7-2.

U.S. Intermediate Agricultural Product Exports, FY 1998-99

Commodity	*FY 1998*	*FY 1999*	*1998-99 change*
	—$ million—		*Percent*
Feeds & fodder	1,675	1,552	-7
Hides & skins	1,337	1,102	-18
Soybean meal	*1,944	1,065	-45
Veg. oils (excl. soy oil)	*1,027	919	-11
Planting seeds	807	810	0
Sugar, sweeteners, & beverage bases	716	689	-4
Live animals	655	621	-5
Soybean oil	*882	608	-31
Animal fats	629	529	-16
Wheat flour	115	175	+52
Other	2,308	2,558	+11
Total	**12,096**	**10,628**	**-12**

*Denotes a record-high export value.

Table 7-3.

U.S. Consumer Food Exports, FY 1998-99

Commodity	*FY 1998*	*FY 1999*	*1998-99 change*
	—$ million—		*Percent*
Meat, poultry, dairy			
Red meats	4,405	4,369	-1
Poultry meat	2,347	1,743	-26
Dairy products	*931	887	-5
Eggs & products	*225	184	-18
Fruits & vegetables			
Proc. fruit/veg.	*2,086	2,084	0
Fresh fruit	1,853	1,843	-1
Fresh vegetables	1,114	1,101	-1
Fruit/veg. juices	684	*769	+12
Snack foods	*1,326	1,296	-2
Tree nuts	1,218	1,077	-12
Wine & beer	*785	743	-5
Pet foods	734	689	-6
Breakfast cereals & pancake mix	365	*371	+2
Nursery products & cut flowers	*250	249	0
Other	2,282	*2,406	+5
Total	**20,605**	**19,810**	**-4**

*Denotes a record-high export value.

Table 7-4.

U.S. Agricultural Exports by Major Markets, 1998-99

FY 1998	*FY 1999*	*1998-99 change*	
Market	*—$ million—*		*Percent*
Japan	9,444	8,916	-6
Canada	*7,006	6,937	-1
European Union	8,318	6,820	-18
Mexico	*5,951	5,661	-5
South Korea	2,244	2,449	+9
Taiwan	1,964	2,044	+4
Hong Kong	1,557	1,259	-19
China	1,505	979	-35
Egypt	939	946	+1
Philippines	740	730	-1
Rest of world	13,974	12,263	-12
Total	**53,642**	**49,004**	**-9**

Data include bulk, intermediate, and consumer-oriented agricultural exports.
*Denotes a record-high export value.

continued to grow, gaining 5 percent to a record $1.6 billion, with strong demand for U.S. hardwoods (often for re-export as furniture back to the States). Sales to the European Union were off 11 percent, but sales were up 10 percent to Mexico and 38 percent to South Korea.

Seafood Exports Show Solid Gains

After a 3-year decline, foreign sales of U.S. fishery products increased a solid 19 percent to $2.6 billion in fiscal 1999, recovering nearly half the value lost since 1995. Although all major product categories registered increases, a recovery in salmon had the largest impact. Exports of U.S. whole/eviscerated salmon climbed 43 percent, mainly due to a larger Alaskan harvest.

Japan, the dominant market for salmon, also accounted for most of the $102-million increase in U.S. fish egg exports. For crabs and crabmeat, record sales to China (up 316 percent to $20 million) and Canada were key factors. Fiscal 1992 remains the decade’s high point, when U.S. seafood product exports totaled $3.3 billion.

International Trade Agreements

In the area of trade policy, FAS is an active and effective advocate for U.S. agricultural exports. FAS works closely with other government agencies, including the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), to ensure that the trade interests of U.S. producers and processors are protected. For example, FAS played an instrumental role in ensuring that the Uruguay Round Trade Agreement, signed in 1994, led to lower tariffs and elimination of import bans on agricultural products in over 130 countries. The final agreement also included disciplines on market access, export subsidies, and trade-distorting production subsidies. FAS’ broad trade policy focus now is to monitor and enforce this agreement and others, such as the North American Free

Table 7-5.

U.S. Wood Product Exports, FY 1998-99

Commodity	FY 1998	FY 1999	1998-99 change
	—$ million—		Percent
Logs & chips	1,711	1,716	0
Lumber			
Hardwood	1,240	1,322	+7
Softwood/treated	768	786	+2
Panel products	1,026	918	-11
Other	1,264	1,226	-3
Total	**6,009**	**5,968**	**-1**

Table 7-6.

U.S. Seafood Product Exports, FY 1998-99

Commodity	FY 1998	FY 1999	1998-99 change
	—$ million—		Percent
Salmon			
Whole/eviscerated	246	353	+43
Canned	140	145	+4
Roe & urchin (fish eggs)	270	372	+37
Surimi (fish paste)	270	288	+7
Crab/crabmeat	120	151	+26
Other	1,125	1,272	+13
Total	**2,172**	**2,581**	**+19**

Trade Agreement (NAFTA), while we begin new negotiations to further expand opportunities for American agricultural exports. These new negotiations include the Free Trade Area of the Americas and a new round of World Trade Organization (WTO) multilateral agricultural negotiations during 2000.

The vast majority of the thousands of individual commitments made by our trading partners are being implemented faithfully and on time. To ensure that commitments are fulfilled, FAS works with all interested parties to help identify apparent violations and address them at the appropriate level. In addition to working with the USTR, FAS works closely with USDA agencies such as the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the Food Safety and Inspection Service to field a team with the technical and policy experience needed to resolve problems. This team advocates U.S. export interests as it participates in the day-to-day activities of multilateral organizations such as the CODEX Alimentarius Committee in the Food and Agriculture Organization and the WTO Committees on Agriculture, and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards. These groups help develop international standards that affect trade in agricultural products and monitor compliance with existing trade agreements.

FAS is constantly acting as an advocate for U.S. agriculture exports in our relations with foreign countries. In recent years, for example, FAS has ensured that the Philippines honors its WTO commitments to import pork and poultry, that Korea opens its market for oranges, and that most countries not block imports of U.S. wheat after karnal bunt was discovered on wheat from Arizona and New Mexico. These and many other issues were resolved without initiating a formal WTO legal process, but rather by using bilateral consultations and regular meetings of the WTO committees. FAS has also used the WTO dispute settlement process to successfully challenge several foreign unfair trade practices, including the European Union's hormone ban, Japan varietal testing requirements, and Canada's dairy export subsidies. FAS also represents U.S. agriculture in negotiating with countries seeking membership in the WTO. The United States and Taiwan signed a market access agreement that has Taiwan lifting its import bans and allowing access for U.S. pork, poultry, and variety meats. Upon Taiwan's accession to the WTO, Taiwan will cut tariffs and open tariff-rate quotas on a range of agricultural products. In November 1999, the United States and China signed in Beijing a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement under which China committed to opening its agricultural import market and eliminating export subsidies upon its accession to the WTO.

Food Assistance Programs

Within USDA, the Foreign Agricultural Service is the leader in developing and executing a number of food assistance activities such as Public Law (P.L.) 480 Title I, Food for Progress, and Section 416(b). These programs are designed to help developing nations make the transition from concessional financing and donations to cash purchases. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is responsible for administering Titles II and III of P.L. 480.

P.L. 480 Title I—The objectives of the P.L. 480 Title I concessional credit program include providing food assistance to targeted developing countries and promoting the development of future markets in these countries. The program promotes market development by encouraging importers in the recipient country to become familiar with U.S. trade practices and to establish long-term trade relationships. The program is managed to promote the recipient country's transition to commercial trade by gradually reducing the concessionality of the program, eliminating ocean freight financing, and graduating countries from Title I to the more commercial CCC export credit guarantee program. Title I funds may also be used to support the **Food for Progress (FFP)** program, which is a grant program designed to assist countries working to make the transition to more market-oriented economies. Attention is given to shifting countries from Title I/FFP grant funding to regular Title I long-term concessional credit terms.

Fiscal year activities continued to focus on graduation; however, several Title I programs were initiated to address particular needs such as supporting recovery efforts for Central America following the devastation of Hurricane Mitch and providing commodities to Russia to ensure adequate food and feed supplies following the financial crisis. Additional program efforts also resulted in broadening the geographical base in the private voluntary organization (PVO) portion of the Food for Progress program to include, for example, a greater participation in Africa consistent with the President's African Initiative.

In fiscal year 1999, Title I and Title I-funded Food for Progress agreements were signed for 2.2 million metric tons of commodities valued at about $656.1 million. Of this, about 1.4 million metric tons of commodities valued at about $507.6 million were programmed to Russia as part of the food assistance package announced by the Secretary of Agriculture on November 6, 1998. Ocean freight financing and ocean freight grants totaling $80.2 million were also provided to ship these commodities to Russia under the food assistance package.

In addition to FFP programs carried out with P.L. 480 Title I funds, the funds and facilities of the Commodity Credit Corporation may also be used to support FFP programming. In the case of these programs, PVO's monetize the commodities received under an agreement with CCC to generate local currencies to fund development projects. In fiscal year 1999, USDA continued programming in countries beyond the republics of the former Soviet Union to include Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Programs were planned with U.S. PVO's for projects in 21 countries totaling about 164,000 tons of commodities with a value of about $71 million.

Under the **Title II** emergency and private assistance donations program, administered by the USAID, $28 million can be provided as overseas administrative support. For fiscal year 1999, Title II activities valued at almost $950 million moved a total of about 1.9 million metric tons and assisted more than 45 million beneficiaries in 57 countries and two regions (the Sahel and South Balkans). Funding for Title II increased slightly over the fiscal year 1998 levels, with spending on emergency programming ($513 million) continuing to exceed that of development (non-emergency) programming ($435 million).

USAID-administered **Title III** activities totaled $21.7 million in fiscal year 1999 and moved over 116,000 metric tons of commodities to three countries: Ethiopia and Mozambique in Africa, and Haiti in Latin America/Caribbean.

The **Section 416(b)** program allows for the donation of surplus commodities, made available through CCC stocks, to assist needy people overseas. In fiscal year 1999, approximately 5.5 million metric tons valued at about $794 million were programmed under Section 416(b) including over 5.0 million metric tons of wheat and wheat products under the President's special food aid initiative. These commodities were purchased by CCC under section 5(d), its surplus removal authority. Of the 5.5 million metric tons programmed in fiscal year 1999, about 1.6 million were donated to the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) to be used in WFP emergency operations, protracted relief and recovery operations, and development projects. Operation and project beneficiaries included refugees, the internally displaced, and the hungry in poor countries and locations such as Ethiopia, Kosovo, and North Korea. The balance of about 3.9 million metric tons was programmed through government-to-government agreements and agreements with PVO's.

Commercial Export Credit Guarantee Programs

The primary objective of the credit guarantee programs is to improve the competitive position of U.S. agricultural commodities in international markets by facilitating the extension of export credit to middle-income countries that do not have access to adequate commercial credit. These CCC programs encourage U.S. lenders (typically commercial banks) to extend credit which is used by overseas customers to pay U.S. exporters. Increasing these guarantee programs supports the involvement of foreign private sector banks and private sector importers in commercial trade transactions with the United States.

The GSM-102 program guarantees repayments of short-term credits (90 days to 3 years) extended by U.S. financial institutions to eligible banks in countries that purchase U.S. farm products. For fiscal year 1999, GSM-102 allocations of about $5.1 billion were announced to 24 countries and 11 regional groupings, including the Andean, Baltic, Central American, Central Europe, East Africa, East Caribbean, Southeast Asia, Southeast Europe, Southern Africa, West African, and West Caribbean regions. Under this availability, GSM-102 registrations totaled about $3.0 billion for exports to 13 countries and 8 regions.

The GSM-103 program is designed to help developing nations make the transition from concessional financing to cash purchases. Guarantees issued under the GSM-103 program can cover financing periods of more than 3 and up to 10 years. For fiscal year 1999, $377 million in intermediate credit guarantees were made available to 12 countries and two regions—the Central America and Southern Africa regions. Under this availability, GSM-103 registrations totaled $44.2 million of U.S. agricultural exports to five countries and one region.

The Supplier Credit Guarantee Program (SCGP) provides export credit guarantees for sales financed by foreign importers rather than financial institutions. Under the program, CCC guarantees a portion of payments due from importers under short-term financing (up to 180 days) that exporters have extended directly to importers for the purchase of U.S. agricultural commodities and products. The program initially targeted only high-value and value-added products that are sold in smaller size export transactions. However, in fiscal year 1998, bulk commodities were added and additional countries were programmed, which greatly increased program usage and resulted in registrations of more than $18 million, a 21-percent increase over fiscal year 1997. For fiscal year 1999, allocations under the SCGP totaled $361 million in coverage for sales to 12 countries and 8 regions, including the Andean, Baltic, Central America, Central Europe, East Africa, East Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and Southeast Europe regions. Under the announced fiscal year 1999 availability, registrations totaled $46.02 million.

The Facilities Guarantee Program was introduced in fiscal year 1998 as a pilot program. This new program is designed to provide payment guarantees to facilitate the financing of manufactured goods and services exported from the United States to improve or establish agriculture-related facilities in emerging markets. By supporting such facilities, USDA intends to enhance sales of U.S. agricultural commodities and products to emerging markets where the demand for them may be constricted due to inadequate storage, processing, or handling capabilities. Repayment terms range from 1 to 10 years. In fiscal year 1999, USDA continued to expand its available credit guarantee lines for the program. For example, fiscal year 1999 is the first year that the program has been made available for certain African countries. Moreover, USDA has increased its efforts to promote the program to the U.S. and overseas trade and to educate them about how the program works. Although no credit guarantees for facilities have been finalized to date, USDA anticipates increased interest and participation once the program becomes better known and established.

Export Assistance Programs

The Export Enhancement Program (EEP), announced by USDA on May 15, 1985, operates under authority of the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978, as amended, the Uruguay Round Agreement Act, and the Federal Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (FAIR Act). The EEP permits USDA to provide bonuses to make U.S. commodities more competitive in the world marketplace and to offset the adverse effects of unfair trade practices or subsidies.

The FAIR Act sets maximum funding levels for the CCC to make available for the EEP each fiscal year through 2002 as follows: FY 1996, $350 million; FY 1997, $250 million; FY 1998, $500 million; FY 1999, $550 million; FY 2000, $579 million; FY 2001, $478 million; and FY 2002, $478 million.

EEP was made operational for fiscal year 1999. Fiscal year 1999 bonuses of about $1.4 million were awarded for 2,446 metric tons of frozen poultry.

Dairy Export Programs

The Dairy Export Incentive Program (DEIP) helps exporters sell certain U.S. dairy products at prices lower than the exporter’s cost of acquiring them. The major objective of the program is to develop export markets for dairy products where U.S. products are not competitive because of the presence of subsidized products from other countries.

Section 148 of the FAIR Act focuses the DEIP on market development and provides for full authority and funding to reach the volume or spending limits that are consistent with U.S. obligations as a member of the World Trade Organization. The DEIP operates on a bid bonus system similar to EEP, with cash bonus payments.

The major markets assisted in fiscal year 1999 included Asia, the former Soviet Union, and Latin America, with $145 million in bonuses awarded on about 136,000 metric tons of dairy products.

Market Access Program

The Market Access Program (MAP) is authorized by Section 203 of the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978, as amended. The MAP is funded at $90 million annually for fiscal years 1996 through 2002 and is designed to encourage the development, maintenance, and expansion of foreign markets for U.S. agricultural commodities. Since its inception, the MAP has provided cost-share funds to approximately 800 U.S. companies, cooperatives, and trade organizations to promote their products overseas.

Foreign Market Development Program

The Foreign Market Development Program, also known as the cooperator program, fosters a trade promotion partnership between USDA and U.S. agricultural producers and processors, represented by nonprofit commodity or trade associations called cooperators. Projects generally fall into one of four categories: market research, trade servicing, technical assistance, and consumer promotions for the retail market. The cooperator program has helped support growth in U.S. agricultural exports by enlisting private sector involvement and resources in coordinated efforts to promote U.S. products to foreign importers and consumers around the world.

International Cooperation

The Foreign Agricultural Service is also responsible for coordinating, supporting, and delivering a diversified program of international agricultural cooperation and development. Its purpose is to enhance the competitiveness of U.S. agriculture, preserve natural resource ecosystems, and pursue sustainable economic development worldwide by mobilizing the resources of USDA and its affiliates throughout the entire U.S. agricultural community.

Food Security

Addressing the issues affecting the world's food supply, March 1999 saw the release of the *U.S. Action Plan on Food Security*. Coordinated by FAS, this report is the United States' official response to the 1996 World Food Summit, where 186 nations committed to reducing global undernutrition by half by 2015. Based on a partnership between government and civil society, the plan provides a road map for U.S. policy to overcome hunger, undernutrition, and food insecurity, both in the United States and abroad.

Scientific Collaboration

Short-term exchange visits between U.S. and foreign scientists, as well as longer term collaborative research, focus on minimizing threats to U.S. agriculture and forestry, developing new technologies, establishing systems to enhance trade, and providing access to genetic diversity essential to maintaining crops that are competitive in the world marketplace.

Technical Assistance

Sponsored by such international donor institutions as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, regional development banks, specialized agencies of the United Nations, and private organizations, technical assistance programs are designed to increase income and food consumption in developing nations, help mitigate famine and disasters, and help maintain or enhance the natural resource base. Technical assistance is provided in areas such as food processing and distribution, plant and animal protection and quarantine, soil and water conservation, and forest management.

FAS' technical assistance contributed to hurricane recovery efforts in the Caribbean and Central America. When hurricanes hit with devastating impact in the fall of 1998, USDA took immediate actions to save lives and offer recovery assistance. FAS then coordinated long-term recovery assistance among nine USDA agencies to promote better environmental practices, food security, and food safety in the affected region. Using resources provided by the FAS-administered 416(b) Wheat Donations Program and USAID, USDA managed a small grants program for low-income farmers recovering from hurricane Georges in the Dominican Republic.

Training

Career-related training for foreign agriculturists provides long-term benefits to economic development, magnifying potential because those who learn teach others. Working collaboratively with USDA agencies, U.S. universities, and private sector companies and organizations, FAS designs and implements study tours, academic programs, and short-term courses and training in a variety of areas such as agribusiness, extension education, natural resource management, policy and economics, and human resource development. FAS' Cochran Fellowship Program helps expose senior- and mid-level specialists and administrators from developing, middle-income, and emerging market countries to U.S. expertise, goods, and services, in order to promote broad-based development that is mutually beneficial to continued scientific, professional, and trade relationships.

One example of FAS' training efforts is a regional workshop on biosafety and plant genetic engineering the agency co-sponsored with the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture in February 1999. Designed to provide a forum for Middle East and Northern Africa policymakers to learn about biotechnology and biosafety issues, the workshop educated key officials, researchers, producers, consumers, and local media about the development and regulation of genetically modified organisms–an emerging focus of research and policy today. In support of the President's Africa Initiative, FAS conducted a May 1999 workshop on meeting international sanitary/phytosanitary standards. USDA officials worked with 37 counterparts from 17 Sub-Saharan African countries to discuss the importance of the next round of the WTO and Africa's role in implementing food safety and other sanitary/phytosanitary international standards.

Risk Management Agency

The mission of the Risk Management Agency (RMA) is to provide and support cost-effective means of managing risk for agricultural producers in order to improve the economic stability of agriculture. Crop insurance is USDA's primary means of helping farmers survive a major crop loss. For example, in 1999, nearly $31 billion in protection was provided on over 196 million acres through more than1.8 million policies; this is almost double the $13.6 billion protection on the 100 million acres insured in 1994.

Crop insurance helps farmers recover from crop losses, secure operating loans, and market a portion of their crop aggressively. In 1998, about two-thirds of the acreage planted to major U. S. crops was insured. During the 1999 crop year, Secretary Glickman took a big step in strengthening the crop insurance program when $400 million was set aside to offer farmers an estimated 30-percent reduction in the year's buy-up crop insurance premiums. Since the discount increased the number of insurance policies sold by 3 to 5 percent, the insured acreage is expected not only to increase, but coverage levels will be greater because of the increase in buy-up policies.

Crop insurance is widely available for major commodities such as corn, wheat, and cotton. Coverage is also available on a growing number of fruits, nuts, and vegetable crops. Nationally, more than 76 crops are insurable (counting all insurable varieties would greatly increase the number of crops insured), although not everywhere they are grown.

To help ensure greater farmer access to this valuable risk management tool, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) Board of Directors (RMA's policymaking panel with private sector and public representation) expanded 35 crop programs into an additional 283 counties for the 1999 crop year. This expansion added to the national total of 28,437 county crop programs in 3,136 counties. Further, RMA continues to develop new pilot programs, such as insurance for cabbage, watermelons, and rangeland. By increasing the number and types of insurance plans, the program will help producers to better manage their production risks.

Crop insurance is sold and serviced by 17 insurance companies in conjunction with a network of 15,000 agents who provide frontline information on the latest programs available to producers. The effectiveness of this partnership is evident in the fact that virtually all indemnities are paid within 30 days of a claim. More information on RMA and its programs is available at: *http://www.act.fcic.usda.gov/*

Insurance Plans Available

Multiple-Peril Crop Insurance

Multiple-Peril Crop Insurance (MPCI) policies insure producers against losses due to unavoidable causes such as drought, excessive moisture, hail, wind, frost, insects, and disease. Indemnities are paid on the difference between what was produced and the yield guarantee. Yield guarantees are selected by the producer and generally range from 50 to 75 percent, but up to 85 percent of a producer's actual production history for some areas and crops. The prices used to pay losses are between 60 and 100 percent of the commodity price established annually by RMA.

Group Risk Plan

The Group Risk Plan (GRP) policies use a county index as the basis for determining a loss. When the county yield for the insured crop, as determined by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), falls below the trigger level chosen by the farmer, an indemnity is paid. Yield levels are available for up to 90 percent of the expected county yield. GRP protection involves less paperwork and costs less than the farm-level coverage described above. However, individual crop losses may not be covered if the county yield does not suffer a similar level of loss.

Revenue Insurance Plans

Revenue Insurance policies include three plans: Crop Revenue Coverage, Income Protection, and Revenue Assurance. Revenue policies are different from standard MPCI policies in that they provide farmers with a measure of price risk protection in addition to covering yield loss. Two of the policies, Crop Revenue Coverage and Revenue Assurance, were developed by private-sector insurance companies. The Income Protection pilot was developed by RMA. These policies guarantee a level of revenue that is determined differently by each of the policies. Indemnities are paid when any combination of yield and price results in revenue that is less than the revenue guarantee.

Adjusted Gross Revenue Plan

In its first year of testing in 1999, the Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) pilot insurance plan, a nontraditional whole farm risk management tool, provides an insurance safety net for multiple agricultural commodities in one insurance product. The plan uses a producer's historic Schedule F tax form information to calculate a level of guaranteed revenue for the insurance period. Qualifying producers can choose the 65, 75, or 80 percent coverage level, and all levels have a 75-percent payment rate.

Dairy Options Pilot Program (DOPP)

RMA currently operates the innovative Dairy Options Pilot Program (DOPP) to help dairy producers protect their income against the risk of falling milk prices. During each round of DOPP, producers in selected pilot counties receive training in the use of futures and options as price risk management tools. Within program guidelines, they may then purchase dairy put options (right to sell) through futures brokers registered with U.S. exchanges. When prices fall, the value of put options increase, thereby protecting the value of at least a portion of the producer's dairy production. USDA assists participating farmers by funding 80 percent of the cost of the options and by paying $30 per contract toward the commission charged by the broker.

Outreach

RMA is intensifying its efforts to reach beginning, small, traditionally underserved, and limited-resource farmers. Some highlights of these efforts include:

- Training and providing technical assistance in risk management with community-based organizations, 1890 land-grant institutions and 1994 tribal colleges, through partnerships and funding of 17 cooperative agreements.
- Funding development of risk management curriculums to meet the needs of American Indian agricultural businesses. Instructional material will be delivered through 29 tribal colleges.
- Improving the risk management skills of Hmong and Hispanic farmers in California by funding risk management training.

- Creating new policies—such as those for sweet potatoes and rangeland—to meet the needs of minority farmers. Many new vegetable and fruit policies will be tested in pilot programs in the next few years.
- Partnering with the National FFA Foundation to produce risk management videos and teaching materials.
- Providing computers with current nursery program software to the Florida Korean Nurserymen Association and local Farm Service Agency county offices. The software will simplify the inventory reporting requirements under the nursery policy.

Risk Management Education

Current farm policy increases the risk borne by producers. To help them acquire the risk management skills needed to compete and win in the global marketplace, RMA is leading a risk management education initiative. This initiative leverages government funds for education with the resources of public and private-sector partners to find improved risk management strategies, develop educational curricula and materials, and train producers in effective use of risk management tools.

RMA facilitates local training with the help of extension specialists and private-sector partners. The initiative is a cooperative effort between RMA; USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service and National Office of Outreach; and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

RMA is also helping to make information on risk management more accessible to farmers and educators by funding the National Ag Risk Education Library, a powerful Internet resource developed by the Center for Farm Financial Management at the University of Minnesota: *http://www.agrisk.umn.edu/*

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